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14 February 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Deputy Director (Research)

SUBJECT : Status Report on CIA Air Activities for
February 1963

REFERENCE : Memo to Special Group Members, from DD/R,
dtd 28 Jan 63, subj: Forecast of CIA Air and
Satellite Activities for February 1963

[REDACTED]

1. There follows a current summary of the status of Agency air activities for the current month, technically commencing with the first day of February, but in some cases covering the period since the initial Special Group approval of the item in question;

PROJECT IDEALIST (U-2)

a. [REDACTED] carried on the February forecast but not approved by the Special Group at its 31 January meeting or subsequently; next action is report of CCPC to USIB 20 February 1963 on possible alternative means of obtaining required coverage.

b. TACKLE Missions; As shown in the Air Activities Forecast, four TACKLE missions were carried over for February and approved by the Special Group on 31 January. All four of the missions had been initially approved 17 January, but one to the Szechwan Basin was reapproved by the Special Group on 25 January as the result of an unsuccessful mission [REDACTED] to the Basin flown on [REDACTED]. This mission failed because of a breakdown in the vacuum valve assembly of the "B" camera system. On 23 January, Headquarters directed that no operational IDEALIST flights would be flown without the modified vacuum valve assembly which was dispatched

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by courier to the field.

The day following the Special Group reapproval of the Szechwan Basin flight, the TACKLE Detachment was directed to conduct further camera tests prior to resumption of operational readiness status. These tests continued through 29 January when all IDEALIST operational missions were suspended by direction of the DD/R in order to assess the camera system and equipment bay malfunction problems.

The operational stand down at both the TACKLE and [] base continued from 29 January until 6 February when both detachments resumed operational readiness status and weather briefings were resumed in Headquarters. During the period 6 through 14 February target weather was below acceptable standards for the Szechwan Basin and South China missions.

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c. [] Missions (North Vietnam); One sortie was approved for February, including permission to transit Laos South of 18° North latitude en route to and from North Vietnam. This mission was originally approved by the Special Group on 17 January 1963. For the interval between 17 January and 29 January when IDEALIST Operations were stood down, target weather was below acceptable minimums. During the period 6 through 14 February target weather has remained below acceptable photographic minimums. Daily briefings, however, continue. Unless North Vietnam weather improves significantly in the very immediate future it is planned to transfer responsibility for the execution of this mission from the IDEALIST Detachment at [] to the TACKLE Detachment at [] in order to permit withdrawal of the U-2 assets originally committed to [] missions over the Sino-Indian Border area.

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d. []; One [] mission was approved for February by the Special Group against targets in the Sino-Indian Border area. The fifth and thus far final [] mission was flown successfully from [] Following this flight the COMOR has not reaffirmed a requirement for the February [] mission based upon target coverage obtained in the first five flights. COMOR is taking a

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final look at the [REDACTED] requirement on 14 February, and if their earlier opinion is revalidated and there are insufficient targets for a sixth mission, Headquarters plans to withdraw the detachment to its home base in California without delay. As noted above, the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] requirement will then shift to the TACKLE Detachment for execution along the tones of earlier [REDACTED] Operations; i. e., with an [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] in a TACKLE aircraft.

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PROJECT [REDACTED]

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PROJECT CORONA

a. CORONA Missions; One CORONA mission was approved for February and is currently scheduled to launch 22 February at 2100Z hours. This will be the first CORONA mission employing the so-called Thrust-Augmented Thor Vehicle employing three piggy-back [REDACTED] solid fuel missiles as a package with the Thor booster.

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b. CORONA/LANYARD Missions; One CORONA/LANYARD mission was approved for February, also utilizing the Thrust-Augmented Thor Booster. At present it appears that this mission will not be executed in February since the payload system has not completed its tests in the thermal and altitude simulator chamber. This is due to several malfunctions in the test chamber and/or payload system. Earliest launch forecast for the first CORONA/LANYARD mission is not prior to 12 March 1963.

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[REDACTED]

JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

Deputy Assistant Director

(Special Activities)

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